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THE IMPROVING ECONOMIC AND CULTURAL STATUS  
OF THE  
NEGRO IN THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

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Division of Research and Statistics  
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THE IMPROVING ECONOMIC AND CULTURAL STATUS  
OF THE  
NEGRO IN THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

Four-fifths of the dependency burden of greater Washington is carried by the District of Columbia. As the Metropolitan area grows, so will the District's burden of dependency, unless the ratio of dependents to total population should decrease.

Most dependents in the District of Columbia are Negroes, who represent the majority of lower income families. This is largely because Negroes have been depended upon to perform the tasks of common labor, household service, and other lower paid and less secure employments, and they have in the past seldom been employed in the more responsible and therefore better paid jobs.

This condition is changing. While the Negro retains a virtual monopoly of common labor, and of domestic service, the percentage of the labor force represented by these low paid occupations is reduced by the mechanization of industry, of construction, of public service, and of the household.

At the same time, the Negro is becoming better educated and better housed, his health has improved significantly, and he is demonstrating his capacity to carry responsibility and to produce effectively. He is being accepted increasingly in employment which pays better, and which is more secure. The net result is that as the Negro's economic status improves, his welfare needs tend to diminish.

The attached graphs attempt to summarize data which are believed to support these statements.



## GRAPHS

1. Employment Status of All D.C. Males Aged 14 And Over; By Color; 1950, 1940, And 1930.

Since 1940 the percentage of males in the labor force has been approximately the same for white and nonwhite.

2. Employment Status Of All D.C. Women Aged 14 And Over By Color, 1950, 1940, and 1930.

From 1930 to 1950 an increasing percentage of white D.C. women entered the labor force in contrast to a decreasing percentage of nonwhite women. A differential of 18.9% in 1930 (white 37.7%, nonwhite 56.6%) was reduced to 4.0% in 1950.

3. Occupation, Male D.C. Workers, 1950, 1940, and 1930; Percentage Distribution.

In 1930 laborers represented 35% of all nonwhite male workers; in 1950 only 23% while the percentage in clerical and sales work increased from 9% in 1930 to 17% in 1950. The chief increase among white male workers was in professional and technical occupations.

4. Occupation, Female D.C., Workers, 1950, 1940, 1930, Percentage Distribution.

As an occupation private household service decreased for white women workers from 21% in 1930 to 3% in 1940; For nonwhite women workers from 61% in 1940 to 29% in 1950. Clerical and sales increased for white women from 43% in 1930 to 66% in 1940 and for nonwhite women from 3% in 1940 to 23% in 1950.

5. All D.C. Persons Aged 16-20 Inclusive, Percentage Enrolled In School, 1950, 1940, 1930, And 1920, By Color.

School enrolment by D.C. youth aged 16-20 increased for white youth from 25% in 1920 to 49% in 1950; for nonwhite from 19% in 1920 to 42% in 1950. This enrolment reached almost its present level in 1930 for white youth; for nonwhite it continued to increase through 1950.

6. Median Number Of School Years Completed By All Persons Aged 25 Or Over, D.C., 1940, 1950 And Projected To 1960; By Sex And Color.

Educational achievement as measured in median number of school years completed appears to be leveling off for white adults at just under 13 years; for nonwhite adults this median while lower is still increasing.

7. Marital Status Of All D.C. Males Aged 15 Years Or Over; 1950, 1940, 1930, 1920; By Color.

Earlier marriage and longer life have decreased the proportion of single men in the D.C. population and increased the proportion of married since 1920. The consistently lower percentage of single nonwhite men results from early marriage.

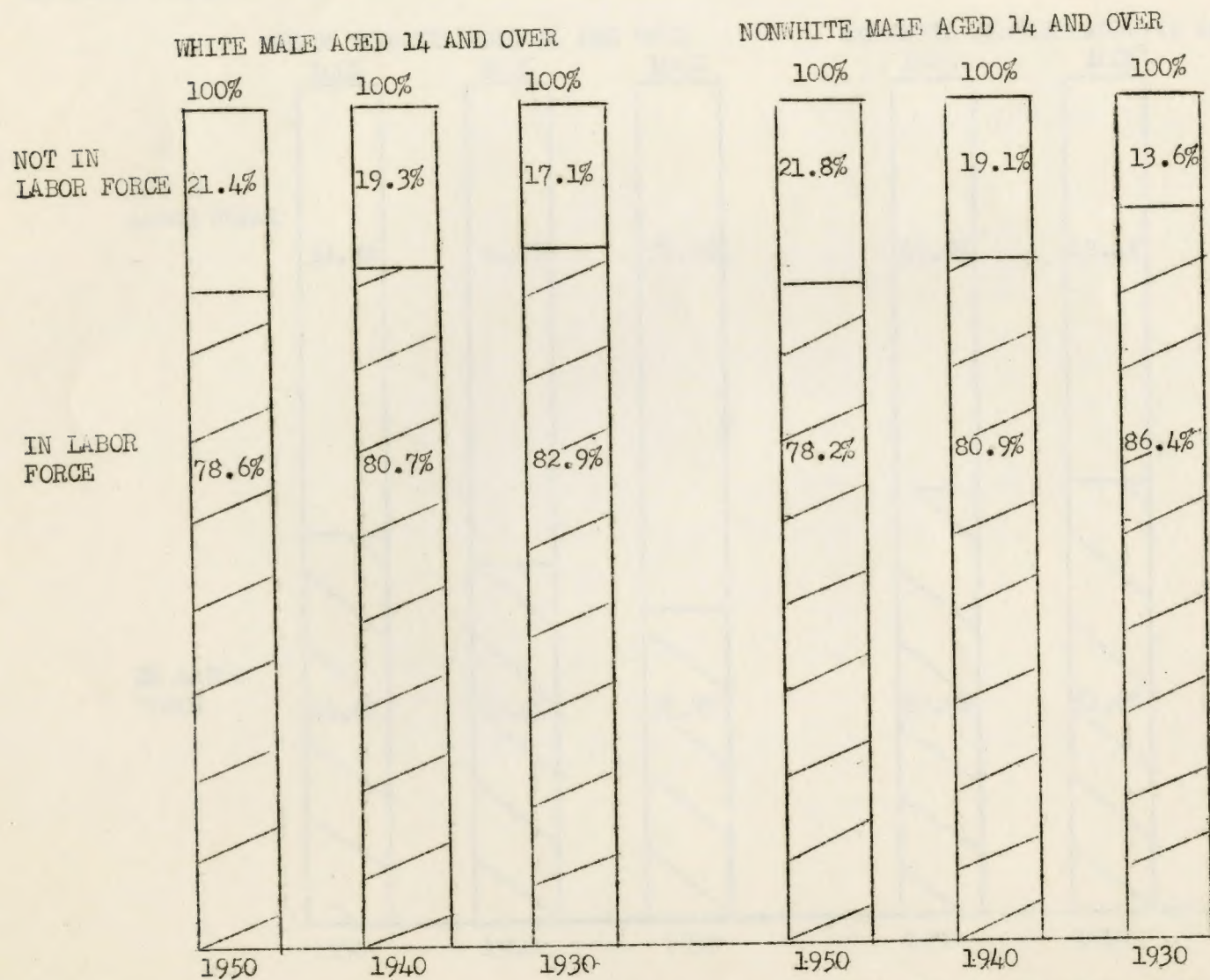


8. Marital Status Of All D.C. Females Aged 15 Years Or Over 1950, 1940, 1930, 1920; By Color.  
As with men, earlier marriage and longer life have decreased the proportion of single women in D.C. with this proportion consistently lower for nonwhite since 1920. While the percentage of widowed or divorced has increased among white women it has decreased among nonwhite.
9. Number of White Occupied Homes.  
White occupied D.C. homes have increased in number by five and a half times since 1890. The rate of increase has been the same for owner occupied homes and for renter occupied homes.
10. Number Of Nonwhite Occupied Homes.  
Since 1890 the number of owner occupied nonwhite homes has increased three times as fast as the number of renter occupied nonwhite homes.
11. Tenure of Occupancy Of Homes, D.C. 1890 To 1950; By Color.  
Since 1890 white occupied D.C. homes have continued to be about one-third owner occupied and two-thirds renter occupied; while home ownership has gained among nonwhite occupants from 15% or less through 1920 to 30% in 1950.
12. Median Value Of Owner Occupied Homes, D.C., 1950, 1940 And 1930, By Color Of Occupant.  
The median value of nonwhite owner occupied homes increased by 83% between 1930 and 1950; that of white owner occupied homes by 64%. The median value of nonwhite homes was 66% of that of white homes in 1930, and 74% in 1950.
13. Median Rent Adjusted To The 1950 Rental Dollar; D.C.; 1950, 1940, 1930 By Color Of Occupant.  
The median nonwhite family paid \$50.02 a month rent in 1950. The type of housing occupied in 1940 by the median nonwhite family rented for \$39.05 at 1950 rental prices. The type of housing occupied in 1930 by the median nonwhite family rented for \$30.77 in 1950. For white families the corresponding figures are \$59.66 for 1950, \$56.43 for 1940; and \$52.10 for 1930.
14. Median Number Of Persons In Owner Occupied Dwelling Units; D.C., 1950, 1940, and 1930; By Color.  
Since 1940 the median number of persons in owner occupied dwelling units in D.C. has been substantially larger for nonwhite than for white occupants. For ~~both groups~~ *nonwhite* this figure has been higher in 1940 and 1950 than in 1930.
15. Median Number Of Persons In Renter Occupied Dwelling Units; D.C., 1950, 1940, and 1930; By Color.  
Since 1930 the median number of persons in renter occupied dwelling units in D.C. has been larger for nonwhite than for white occupants. It was largest in 1940 for both groups with the nonwhite median half again as large as the white in that year.

16. Resident Infant Death Rates D.C., By Color; 1940-44, 1945-49, 1950-53.  
Infant death rates in D.C. improved for white children from 36.0 per thousand live births in 1940-44 to 28.5 per thousand in 1950-53; and for nonwhite children from 73.1 per thousand in 1940-44 to 35.4 per thousand in 1950-53.
17. Resident Death Rates For The Total D.C. Population By Color; 1940-44, 1945-49 and 1950-53.  
The number of deaths from all causes to D.C. residents, per 1,000 of the total white D.C. population was 9.0 in 1940-44 and 9.8 in 1950-53; for the total nonwhite D.C. population it decreased from 13.2 per 1,000 in 1940-44 to 10.7 per 1,000 in 1950-53.

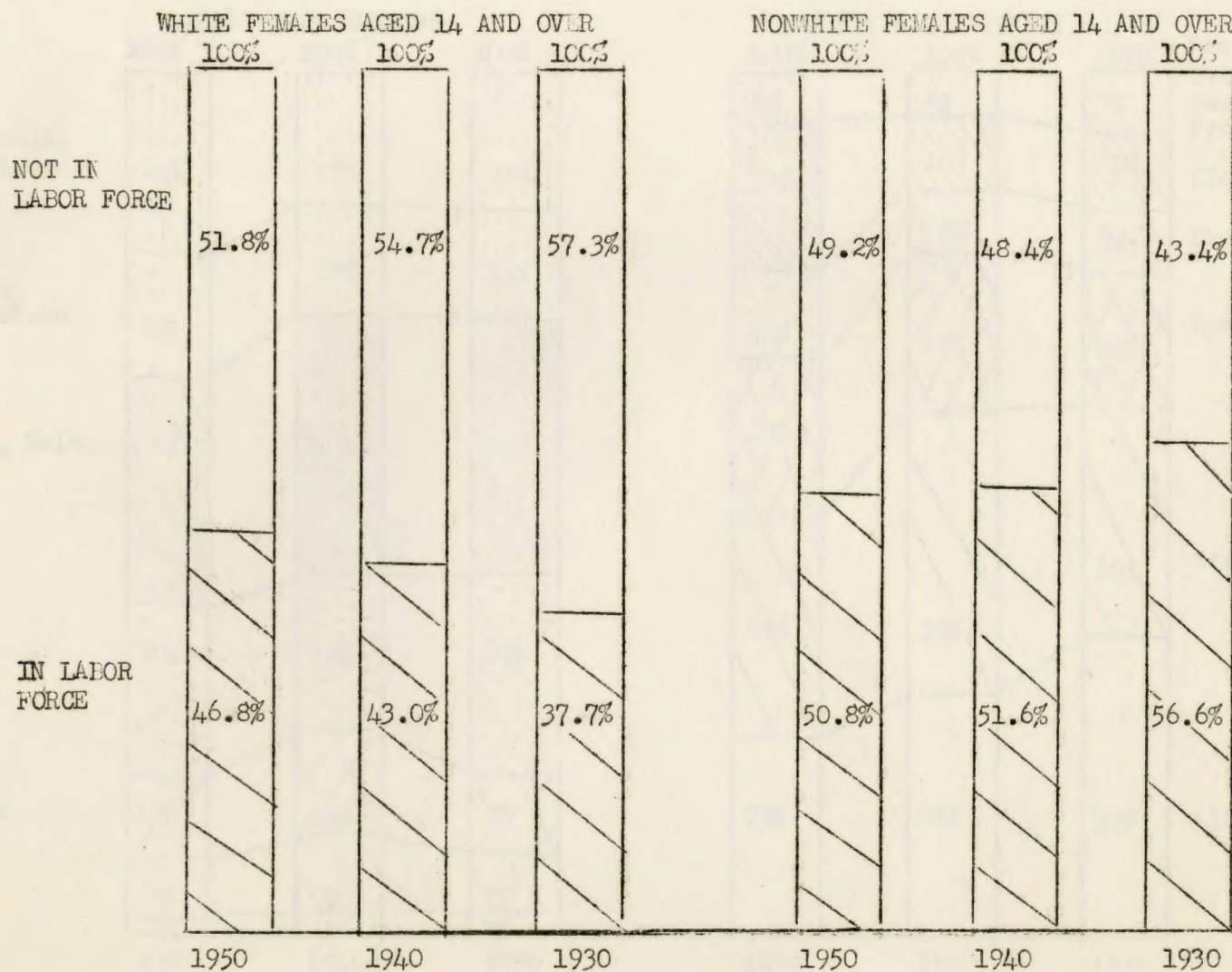


SINCE 1940 THE PERCENTAGE OF MALES IN THE LABOR FORCE HAS BEEN APPROXIMATELY THE SAME FOR WHITE AND NONWHITE



GRAPH 1. EMPLOYMENT STATUS OF ALL D. C. MALES AGED 14 AND OVER; BY COLOR; 1950, 1940, AND 1930

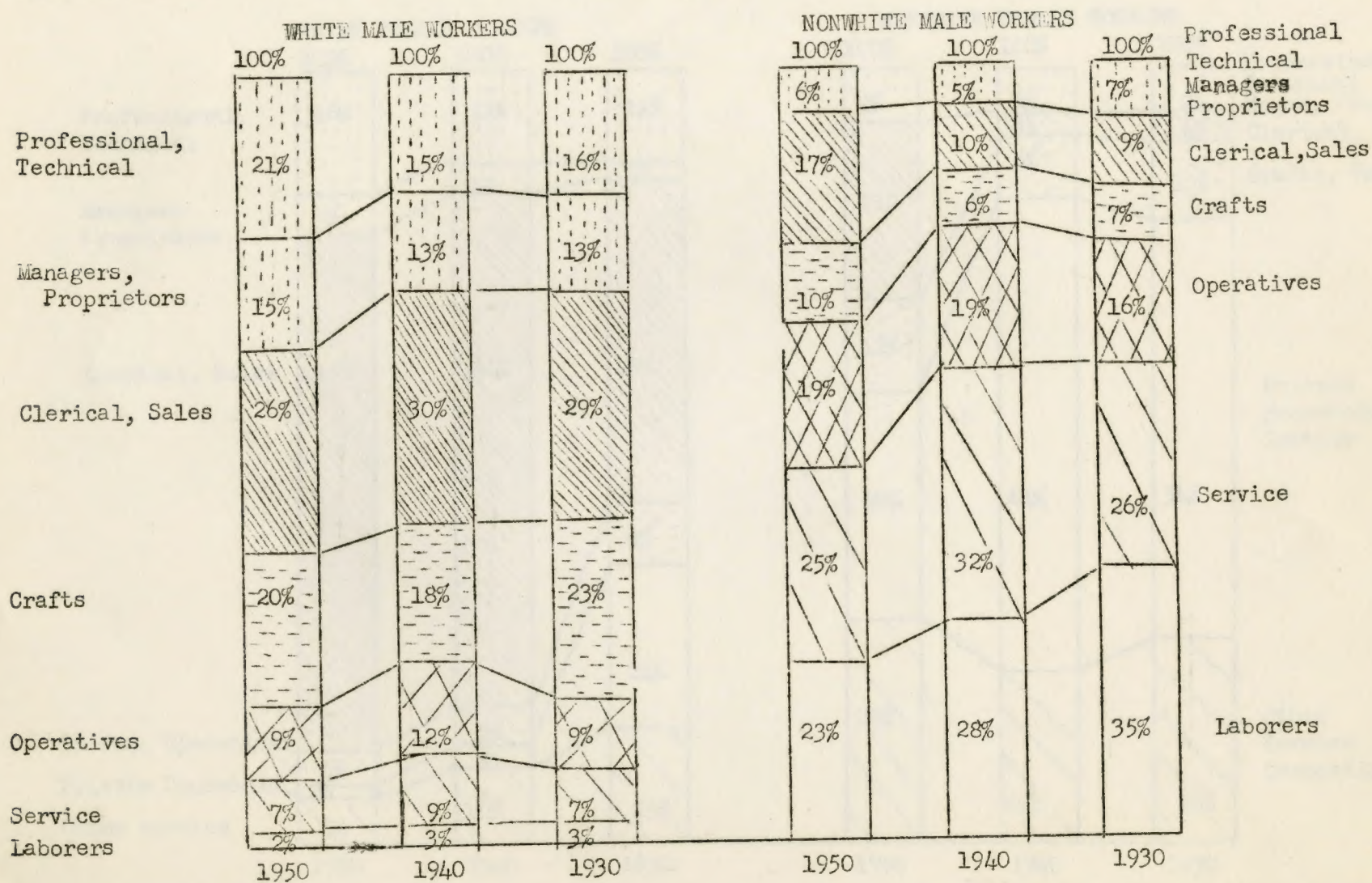
FROM 1930 TO 1950 AN INCREASING PERCENTAGE OF WHITE D. C. WOMEN ENTERED THE LABOR FORCE IN CONTRAST TO A DECREASING PERCENTAGE OF NONWHITE WOMEN. A DIFFERENTIAL OF 18.9% IN 1930 ( WHITE 37.7%, NONWHITE 56.6%) WAS REDUCED TO 4.0% IN 1950.



GRAPH 2. EMPLOYMENT STATUS OF ALL D. C. WOMEN AGED 14 AND OVER BY COLOR, 1950, 1940, AND 1930



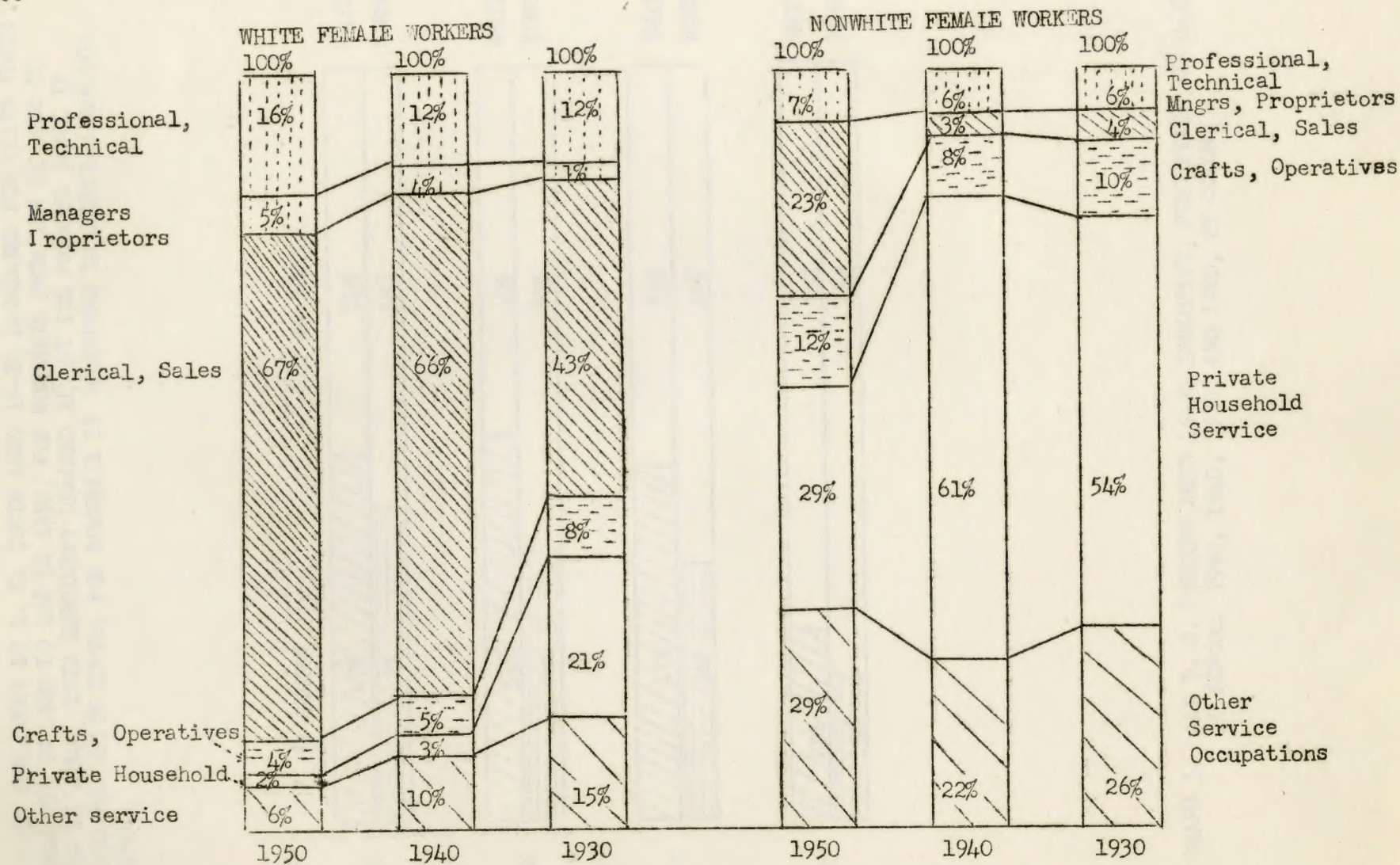
IN 1930 LABORERS REPRESENTED 35% OF ALL NONWHITE MALE WORKERS; IN 1950 ONLY 23% WHILE THE PERCENTAGE IN CLERICAL AND SALES WORK INCREASED FROM 9% IN 1930 TO 17% IN 1950. THE CHIEF INCREASE AMONG WHITE MALE WORKERS WAS IN PROFESSIONAL AND TECHNICAL OCCUPATIONS.



GRAPH 3. OCCUPATION, MALE D. C. WORKERS, 1950, 1940, and 1930; percentage distribution



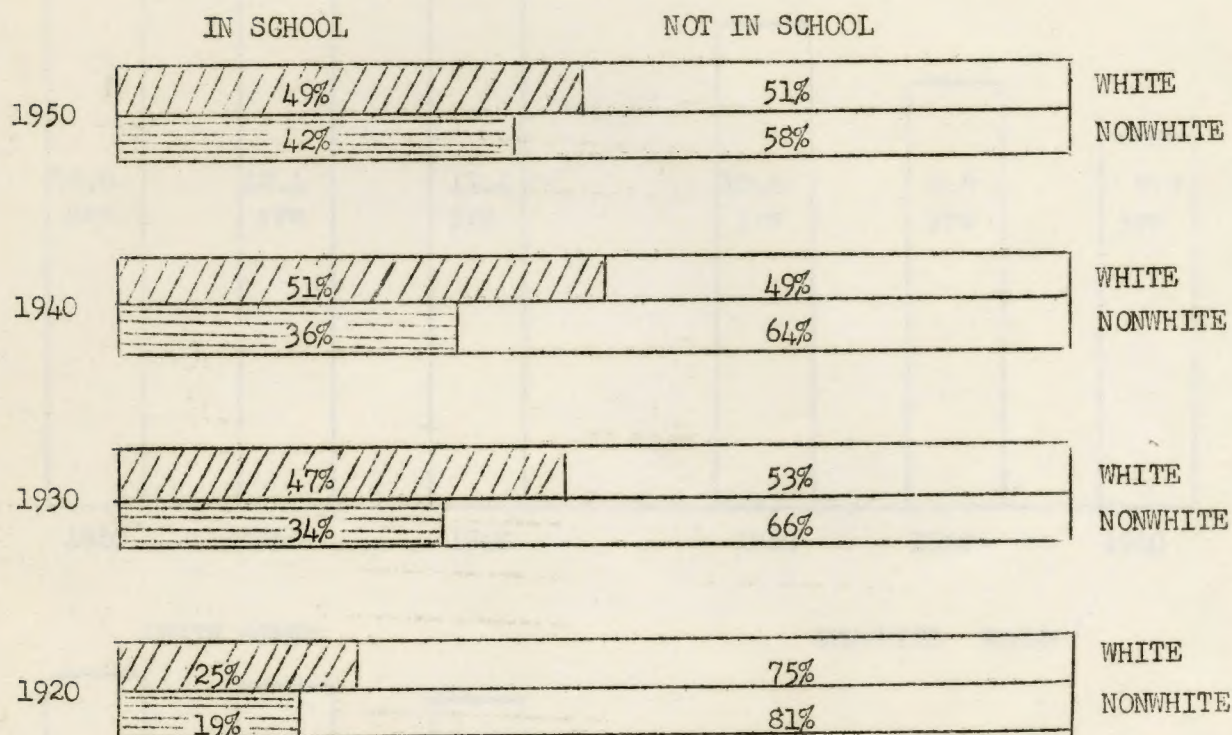
AS AN OCCUPATION PRIVATE HOUSEHOLD SERVICE DECREASED FOR WHITE WOMEN WORKERS FROM 21% IN 1930 TO 3% IN 1940; FOR NONWHITE WOMEN WORKERS FROM 61% IN 1940 TO 29% IN 1950. CLERICAL AND SALES INCREASED FOR WHITE WOMEN FROM 43% IN 1930 TO 66% IN 1940 AND FOR NONWHITE WOMEN FROM 3% IN 1940 TO 23% IN 1950.



GRAPH 4. OCCUPATION, FEMALE D. C., WORKERS, 1950, 1940, 1930, PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION



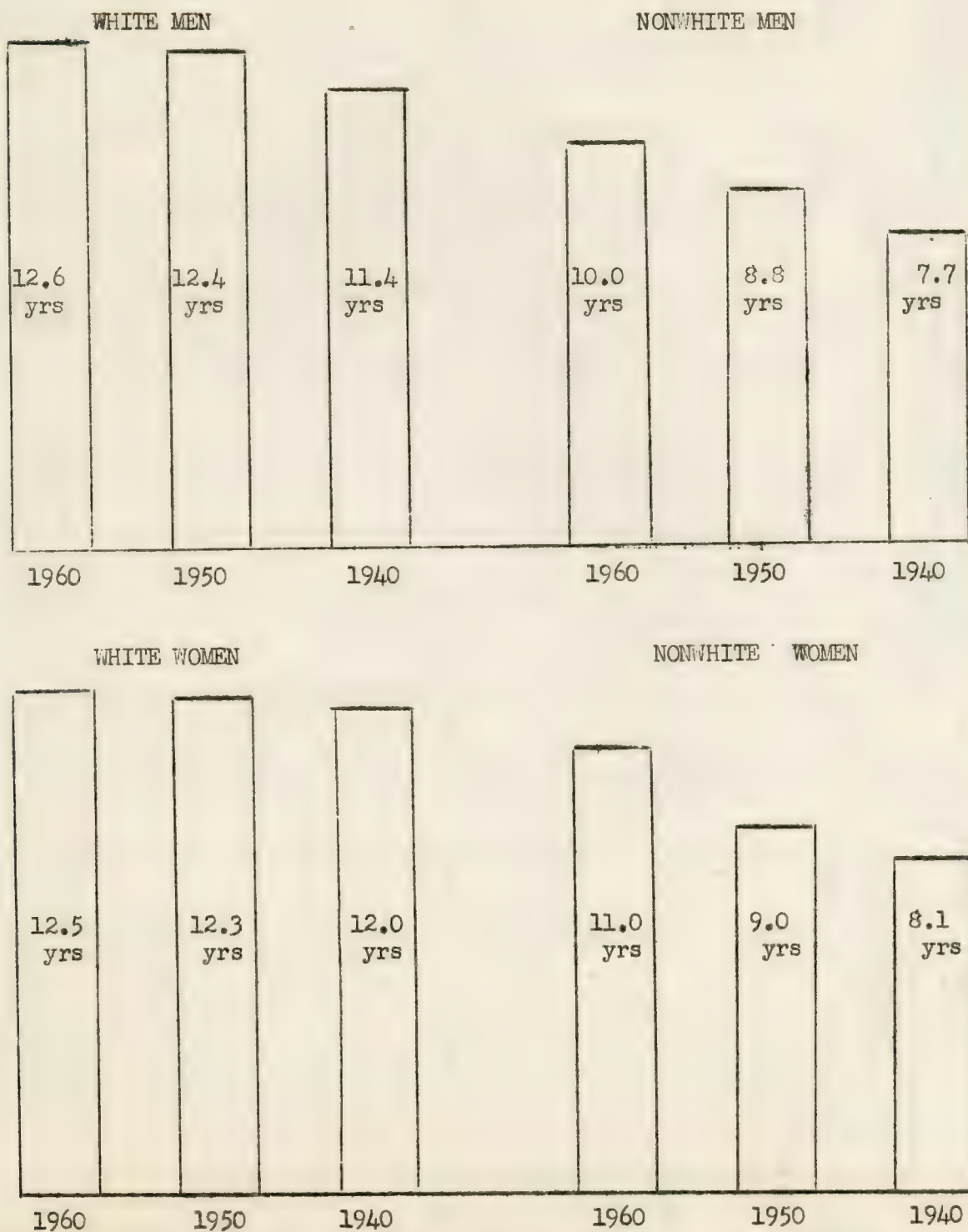
SCHOOL ENROLMENT BY D. C. YOUTH AGED 16-20 INCREASED FOR WHITE YOUTH FROM 25% IN 1920 TO 49% IN 1950; FOR NONWHITE FROM 19% IN 1920 TO 42% IN 1950. THIS ENROLMENT REACHED ALMOST ITS PRESENT LEVEL IN 1930 FOR WHITE YOUTH; FOR NONWHITE IT CONTINUED TO INCREASE THROUGH 1950.



GRAPH 5. ALL D. C. PERSONS AGED 16-20 INCLUSIVE, PERCENTAGE ENROLLED IN SCHOOL, 1950, 1940, 1930, AND 1920, BY COLOR



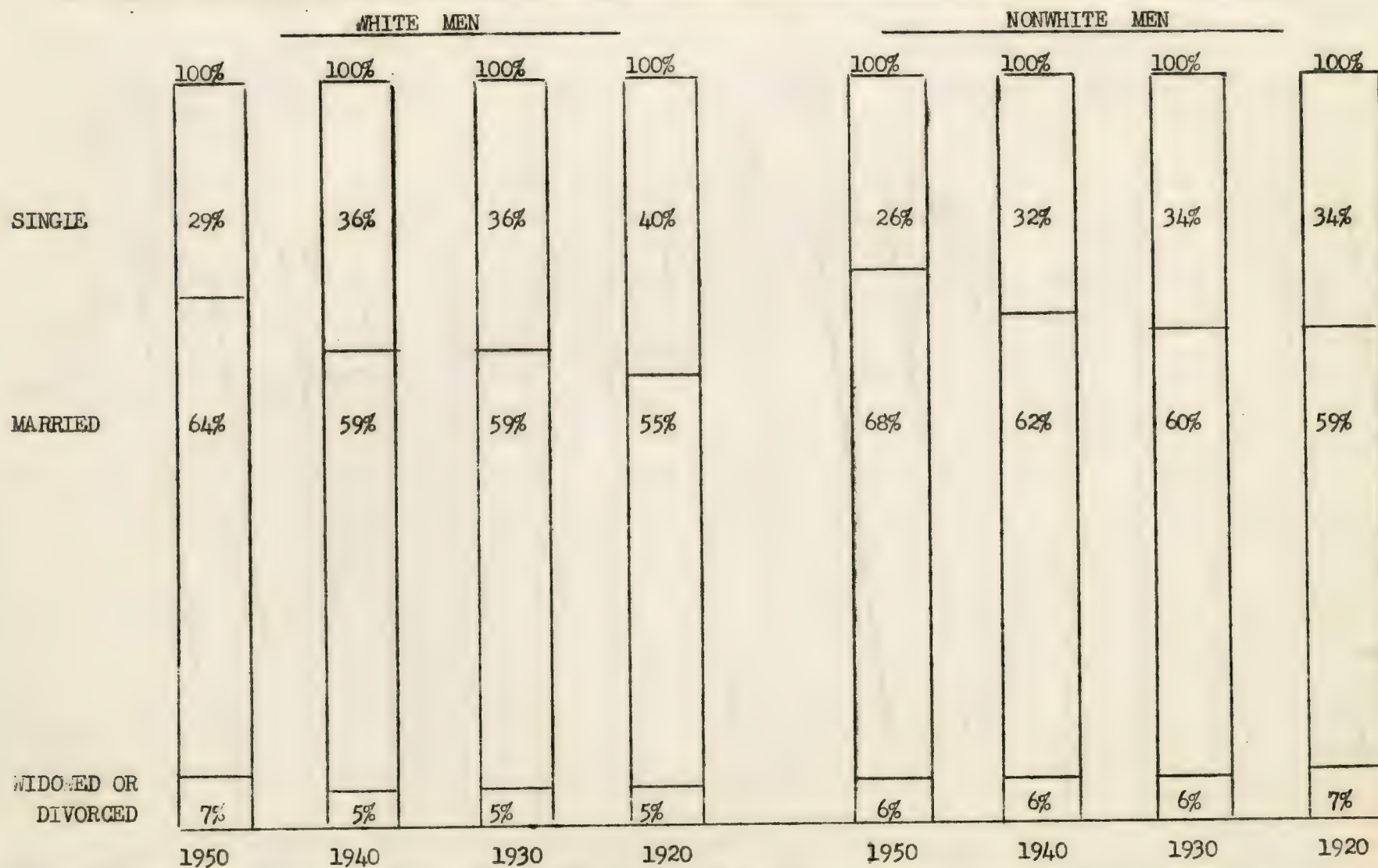
EDUCATIONAL ACHIEVEMENT AS MEASURED IN MEDIAN NUMBER OF SCHOOL YEARS COMPLETED APPEARS TO BE LEVELING OFF FOR WHITE ADULTS AT JUST UNDER 13 YEARS; FOR NONWHITE ADULTS THIS MEDIAN WHILE LOWER IS STILL INCREASING



GRAPH 6. MEDIAN NUMBER OF SCHOOL YEARS COMPLETED BY ALL PERSONS AGED 25 OR OVER, D. C., 1940, 1950 AND PROJECTED TO 1960; BY SEX AND COLOR



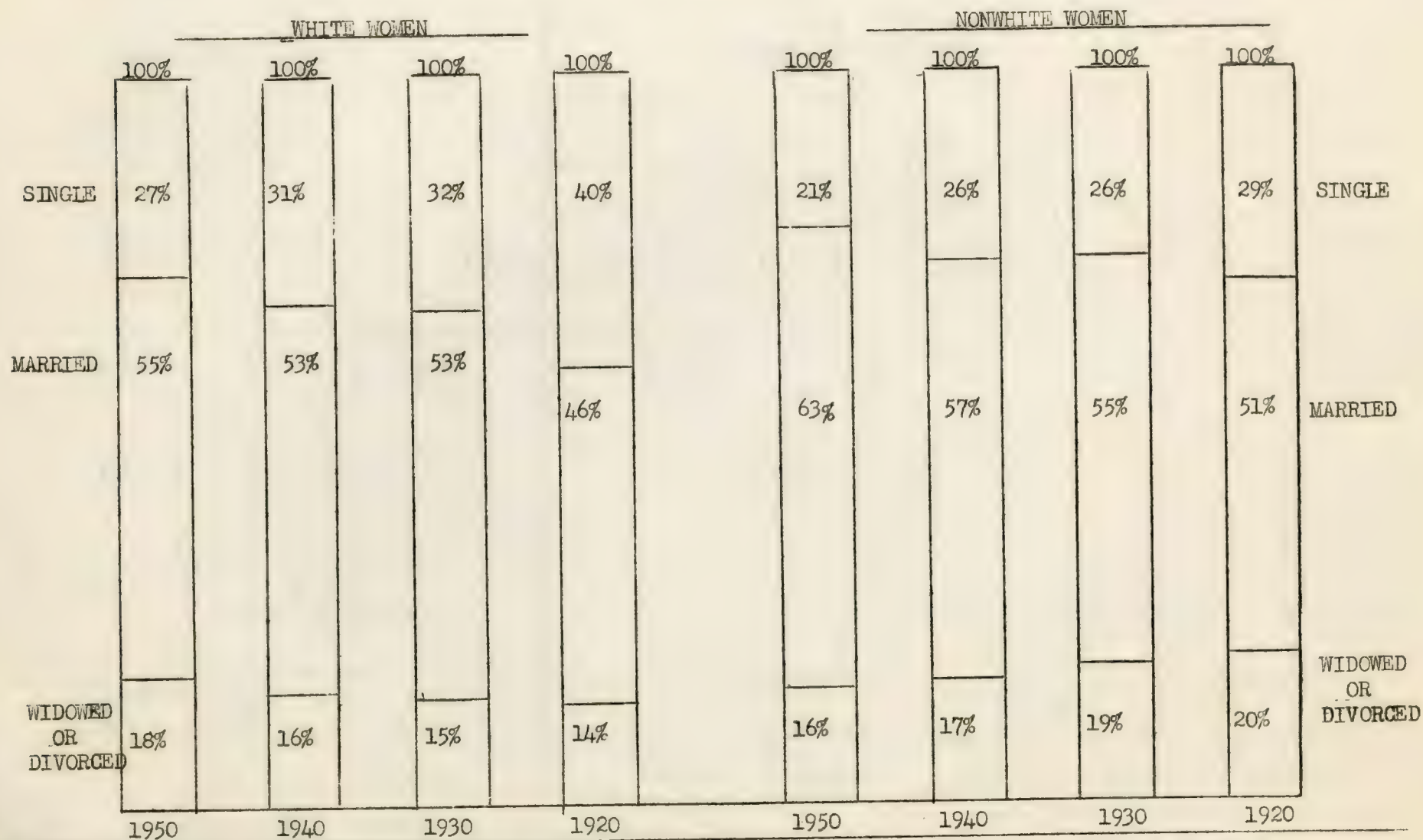
EARLIER MARRIAGE AND LONGER LIFE HAVE DECREASED THE PROPORTION OF SINGLE MEN IN THE D. C. POPULATION AND INCREASED THE PROPORTION OF MARRIED SINCE 1920. THE CONSISTENTLY LOWER PERCENTAGE OF SINGLE NONWHITE MEN RESULTS FROM EARLY MARRIAGE.



GRAPH 7. MARITAL STATUS OF ALL D. C. MALES AGED 15 YEARS OR OVER; 1950, 1940, 1930, 1920; BY COLOR.

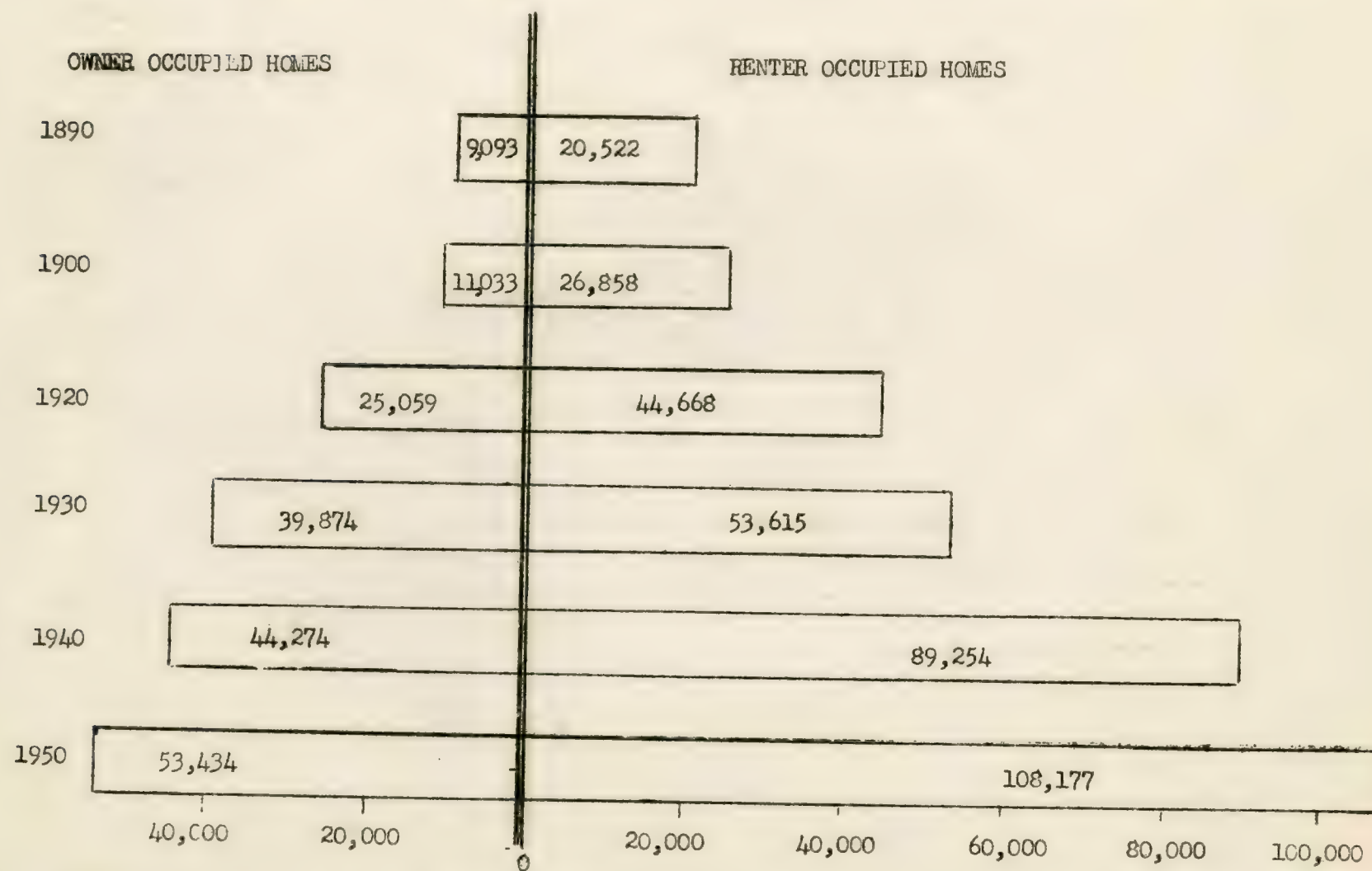


AS WITH MEN, EARLIER MARRIAGE AND LONGER LIFE HAVE DECREASED THE PROPORTION OF SINGLE WOMEN IN D.C. WITH THIS PROPORTION CONSISTENTLY LOWER FOR NONWHITE, SINCE 1920. WHILE THE PERCENTAGE OF WIDOWED OR DIVORCED HAS INCREASED AMONG WHITE WOMEN IT HAS DECREASED AMONG NONWHITE.



GRAPH 8. MARITAL STATUS OF ALL D. C. FEMALES AGED 15 YEARS OR OVER: 1950, 1940, 1930, 1920; BY COLOR

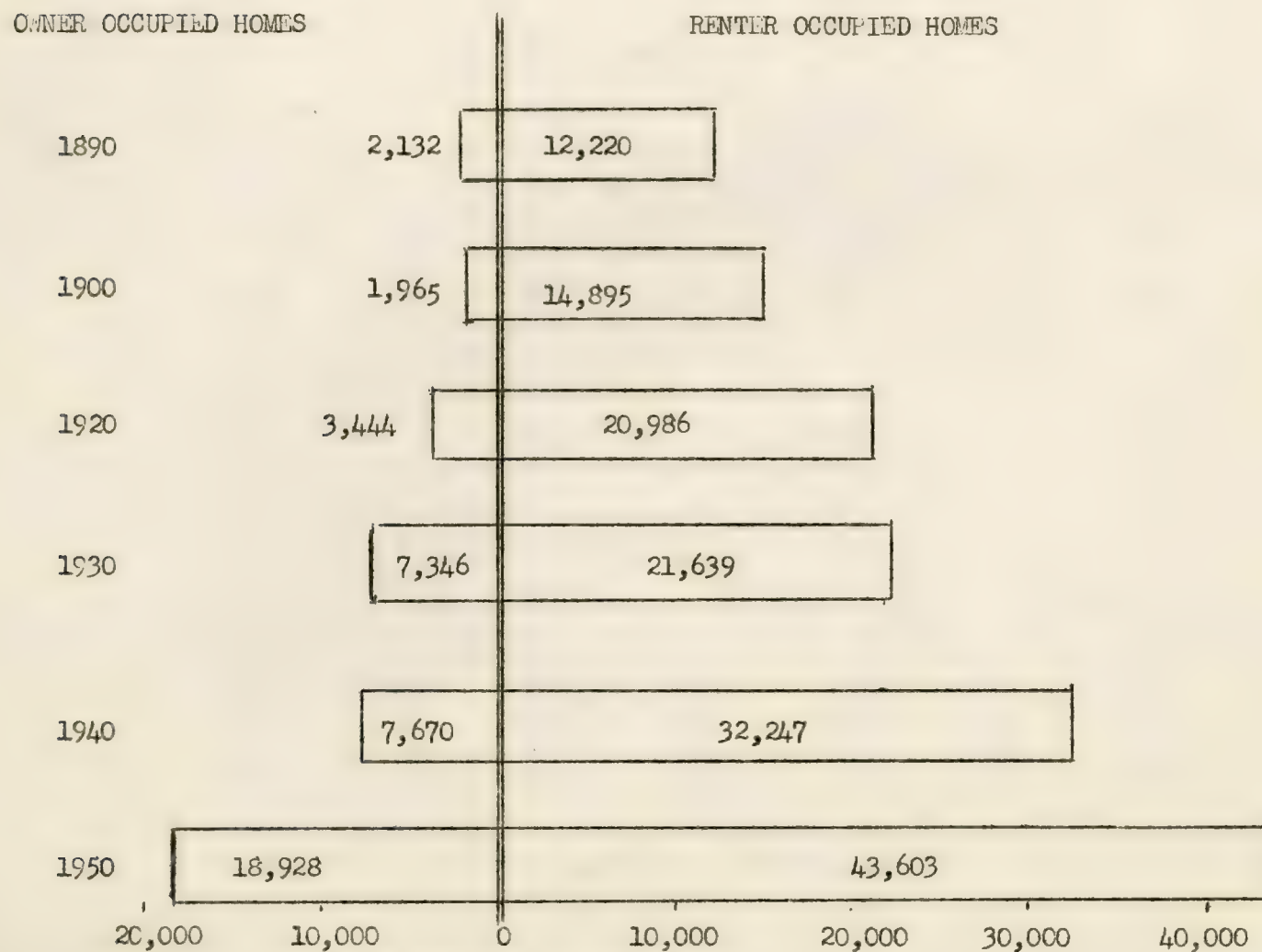
WHITE OCCUPIED D.C. HOMES HAVE INCREASED IN NUMBER BY FIVE AND A HALF TIMES SINCE 1890. THE RATE OF INCREASE HAS BEEN THE SAME FOR OWNER OCCUPIED HOMES AND FOR RENTER OCCUPIED HOMES.



GRAPH 9. NUMBER OF WHITE OCCUPIED HOMES


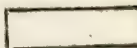


SINCE 1890 THE NUMBER OF OWNER OCCUPIED NONWHITE HOMES HAS INCREASED THREE TIMES AS FAST AS THE NUMBER OF RENTER OCCUPIED NONWHITE HOMES

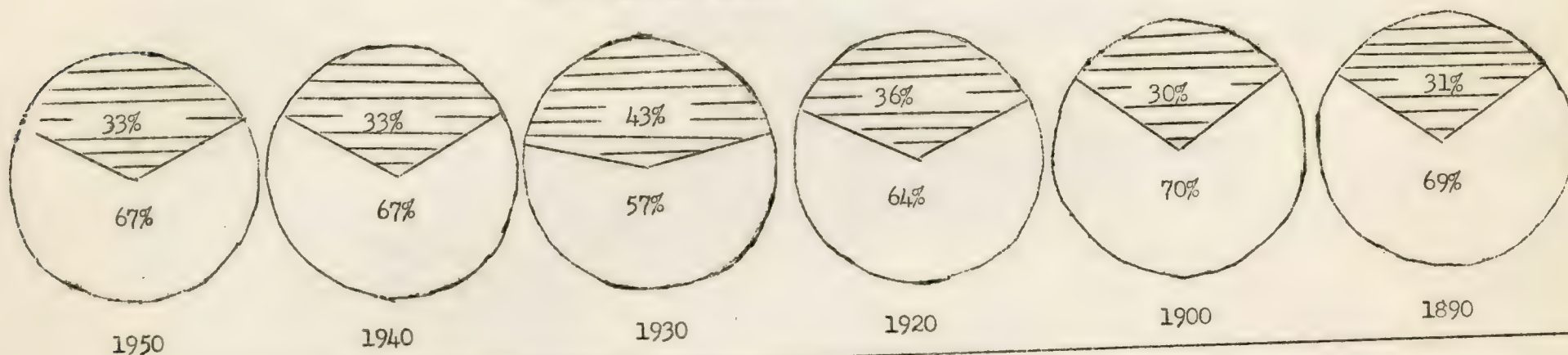


GRAPH 10. NUMBER OF NONWHITE OCCUPIED HOMES

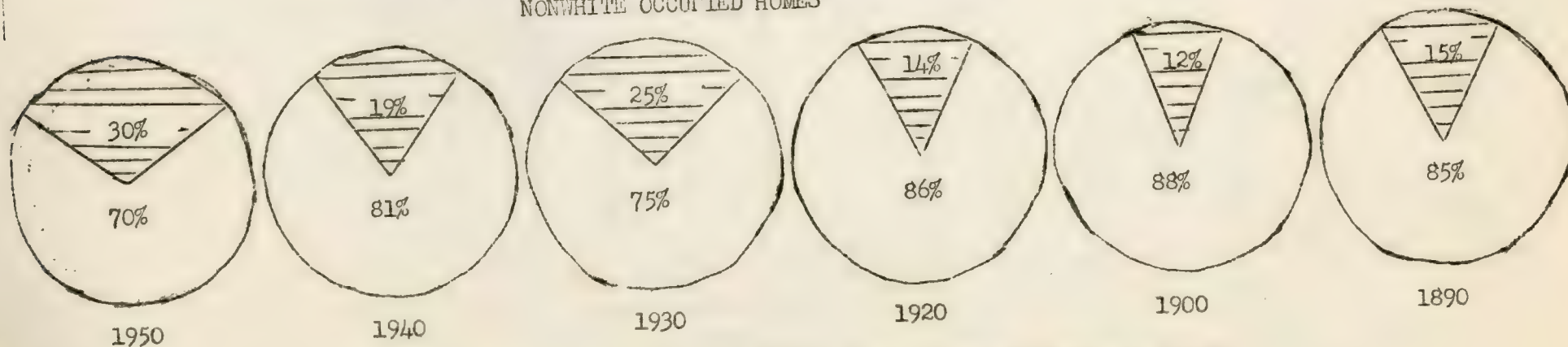
SINCE 1890 WHITE OCCUPIED D.C. HOMES HAVE CONTINUED TO BE ABOUT ONE-THIRD OWNER OCCUPIED AND TWO-THIRDS RENTER OCCUPIED; WHILE HOME OWNERSHIP HAS GAINED AMONG NONWHITE OCCUPANTS FROM 15% IN 1920 TO 30% IN 1950

OWNED   
RENTED 

### WHITE OCCUPIED HOMES



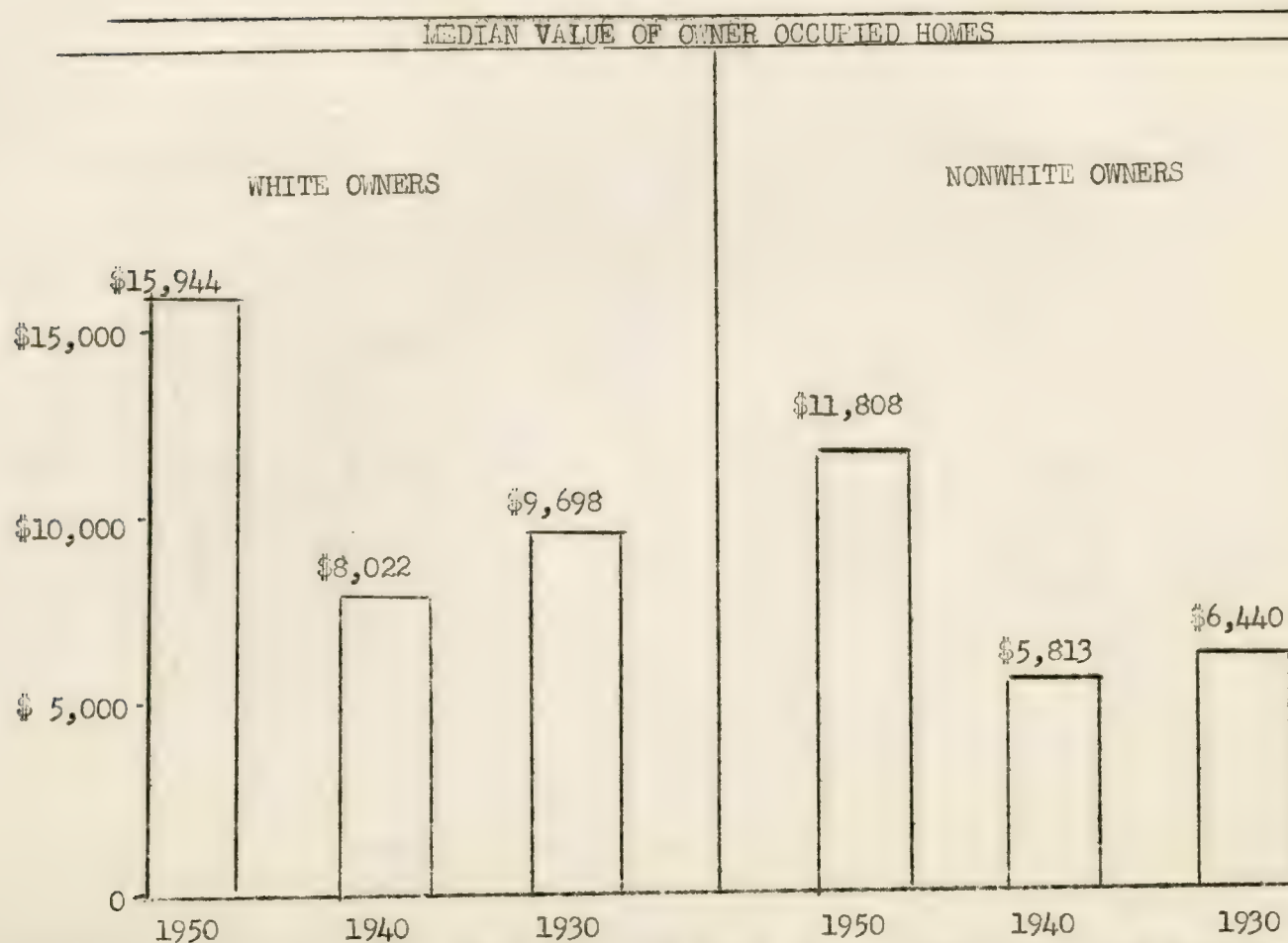
### NONWHITE OCCUPIED HOMES



GRAPH 11. TENURE OF OCCUPANCY OF HOMES, D. C., 1890 TO 1950; BY COLOR

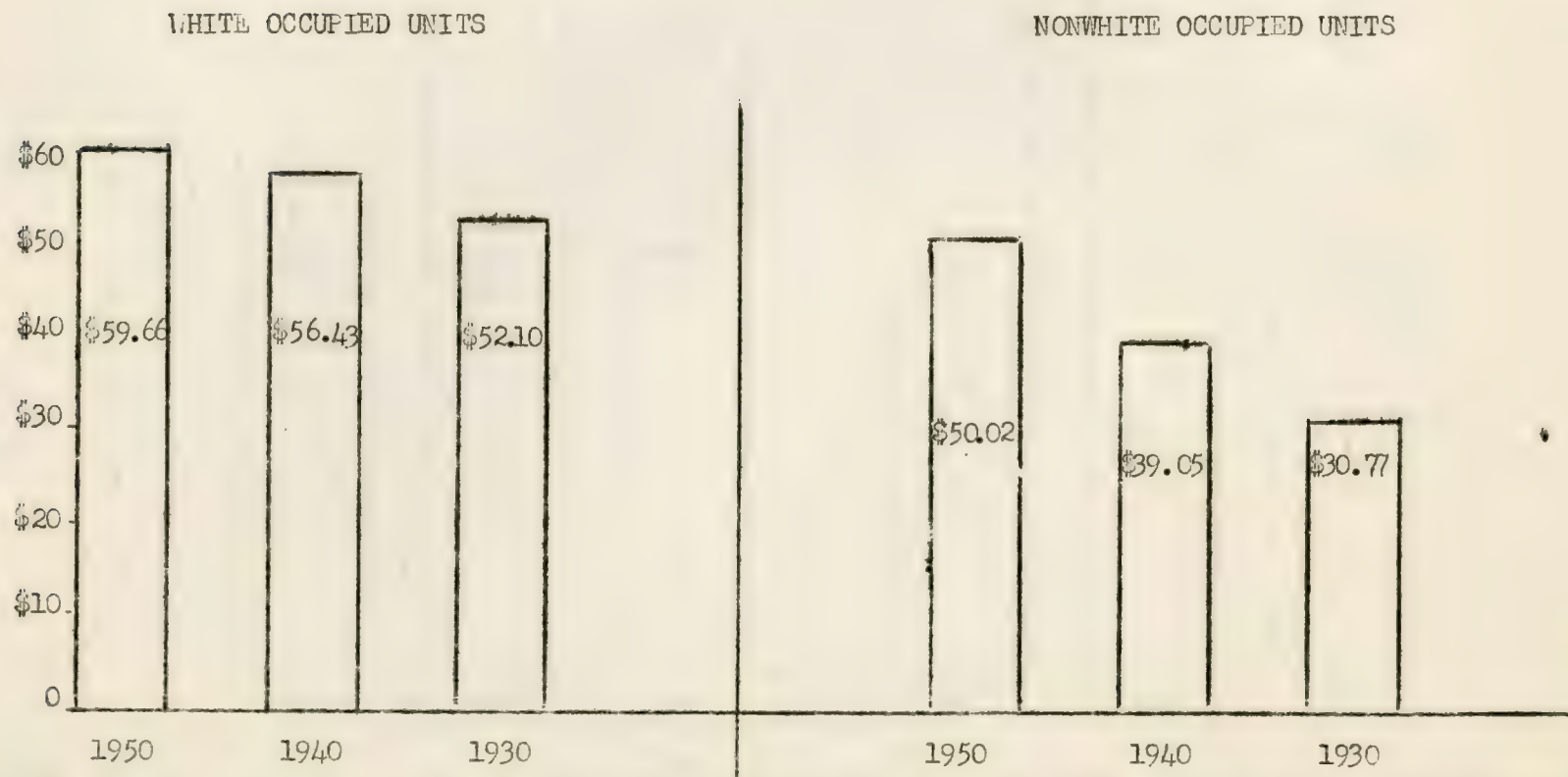


THE MEDIAN VALUE OF NONWHITE OWNER OCCUPIED HOMES INCREASED BY 83% BETWEEN 1930 AND 1950; THAT OF WHITE OWNER OCCUPIED HOMES BY 64%. THE MEDIAN VALUE OF NONWHITE HOMES WAS 66% OF THAT OF WHITE HOMES IN 1930, AND 74% IN 1950.



GRAPH 12. MEDIAN VALUE OF OWNER OCCUPIED HOMES, D. C., 1950, 1940, AND 1930; BY COLOR

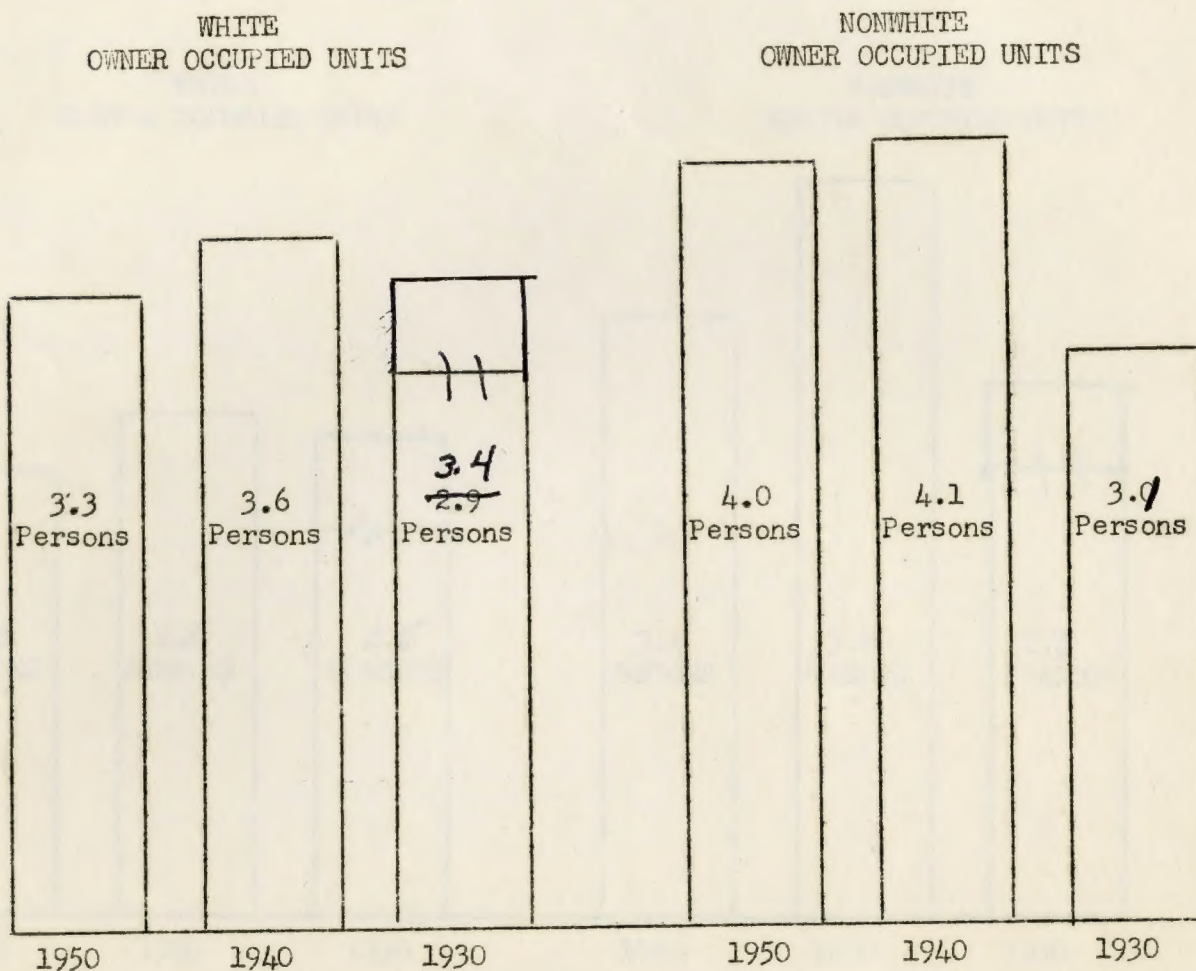
THE MEDIAN NONWHITE FAMILY PAID \$50.02 A MONTH RENT IN 1950. THE TYPE OF HOUSING OCCUPIED IN 1940 BY THE MEDIAN NONWHITE FAMILY RENTED FOR \$39.05 AT 1950 RENTAL PRICES. THE TYPE OF HOUSING OCCUPIED IN 1930 BY THE MEDIAN NONWHITE FAMILY RENTED FOR \$30.77 IN 1950. FOR WHITE FAMILIES THE CORRESPONDING FIGURES ARE \$59.66 FOR 1950, \$56.43 FOR 1940; AND \$52.10 FOR 1930.



GRAPH 13. MEDIAN RENT ADJUSTED TO THE 1950 RENTAL DOLLAR; D. C.; 1950, 1940, 1930; BY COLOR OF OCCUPANT

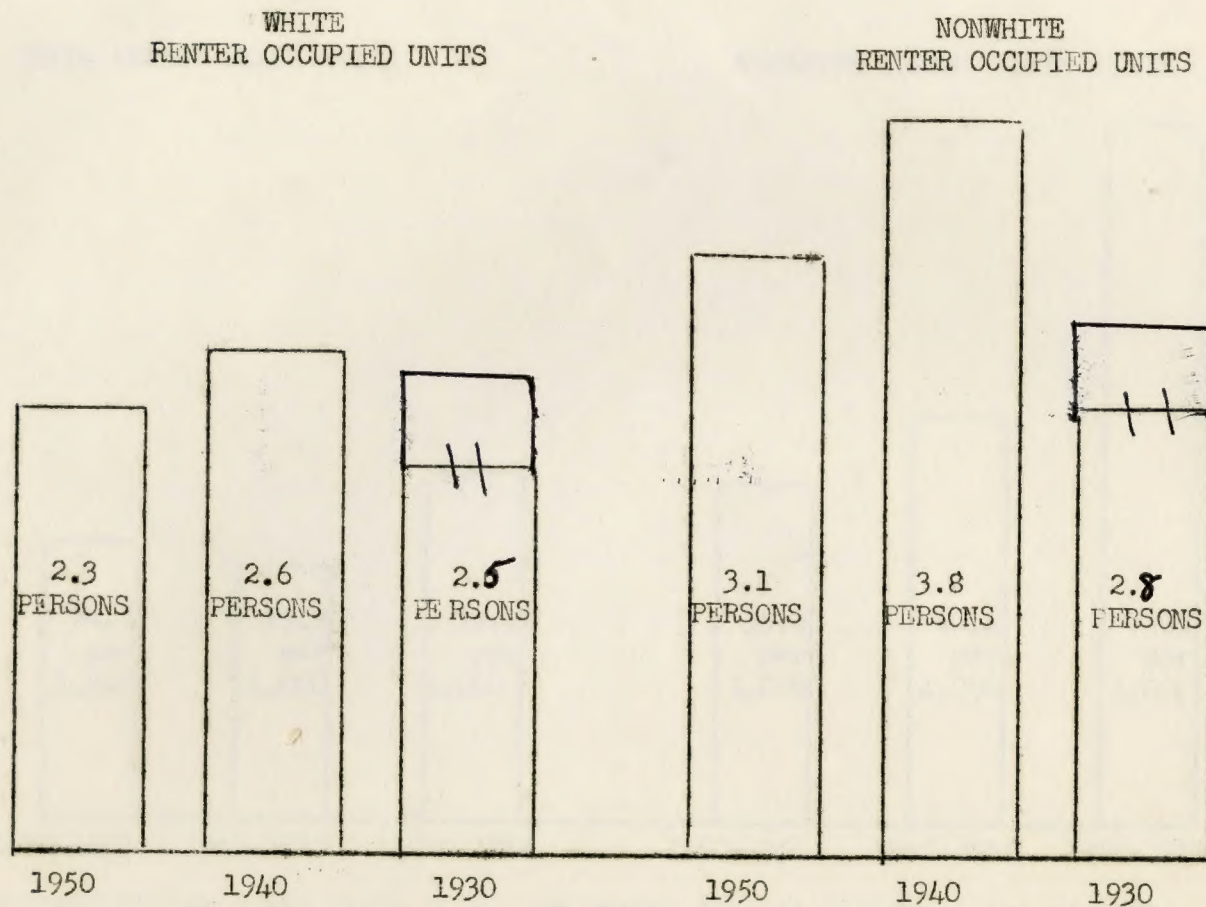


SINCE 1940 THE MEDIAN NUMBER OF PERSONS IN OWNER OCCUPIED DWELLING UNITS IN D. C. HAS BEEN SUBSTANTIALLY LARGER FOR NONWHITE THAN FOR WHITE OCCUPANTS. FOR ~~BOTH GROUPS~~ <sup>NONWHITE</sup> THIS FIGURE HAS BEEN HIGHER IN 1940 AND 1950 THAN IN 1930.



GRAPH 14. MEDIAN NUMBER OF PERSONS IN OWNER OCCUPIED DWELLING UNITS; D. C., 1950, 1940, AND 1930; BY COLOR

SINCE 1930 THE MEDIAN NUMBER OF PERSONS IN RENTER OCCUPIED DWELLING UNITS IN D. C. HAS BEEN LARGER FOR NONWHITE THAN FOR WHITE OCCUPANTS. IT WAS LARGEST IN 1940 FOR BOTH GROUPS WITH THE NONWHITE MEDIAN HALF AGAIN AS LARGE AS THE WHITE IN THAT YEAR.



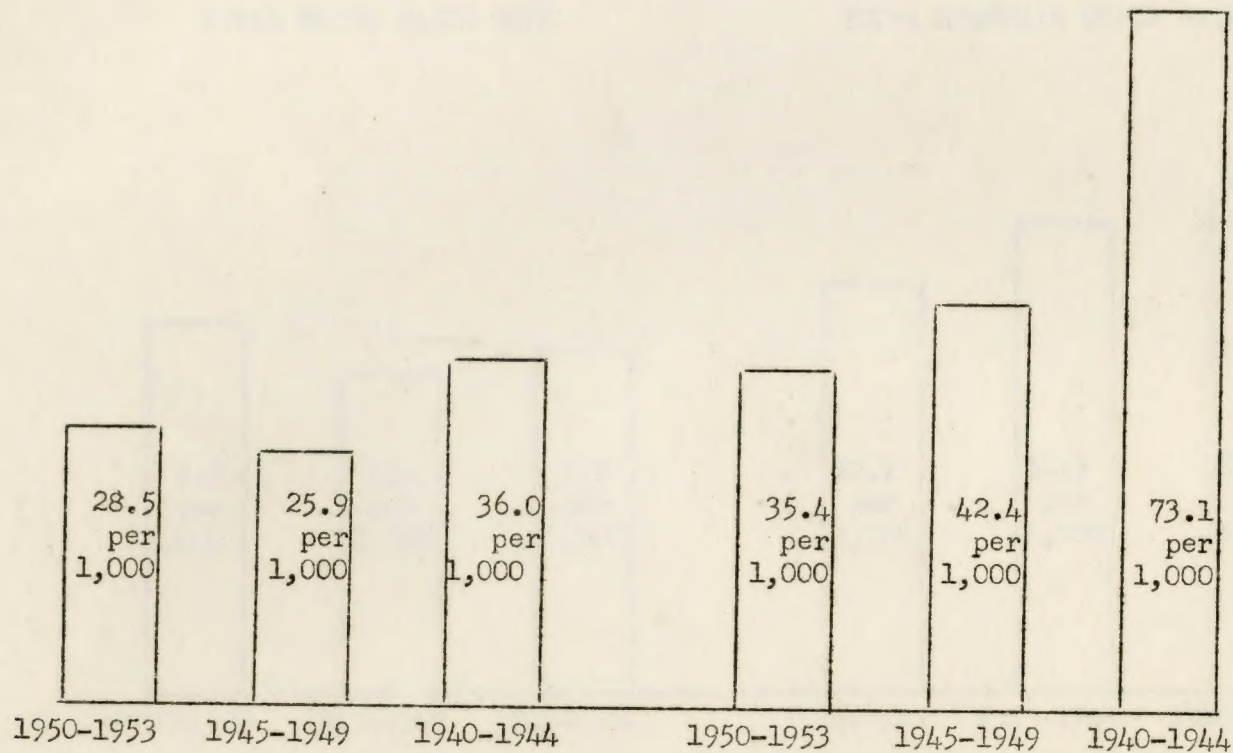
GRAPH 15. MEDIAN NUMBER OF PERSONS IN RENTER OCCUPIED DWELLING UNITS; D. C., 1950, 1940, AND 1930; BY COLOR



INFANT DEATH RATES IN D. C., IMPROVED FOR WHITE CHILDREN FROM 36.0 PER THOUSAND LIVE BIRTHS IN 1940-44 TO 28.5 PER THOUSAND IN 1950-53; AND FOR NONWHITE CHILDREN FROM 73.1 PER THOUSAND IN 1940-44 TO 35.4 PER THOUSAND IN 1950-53

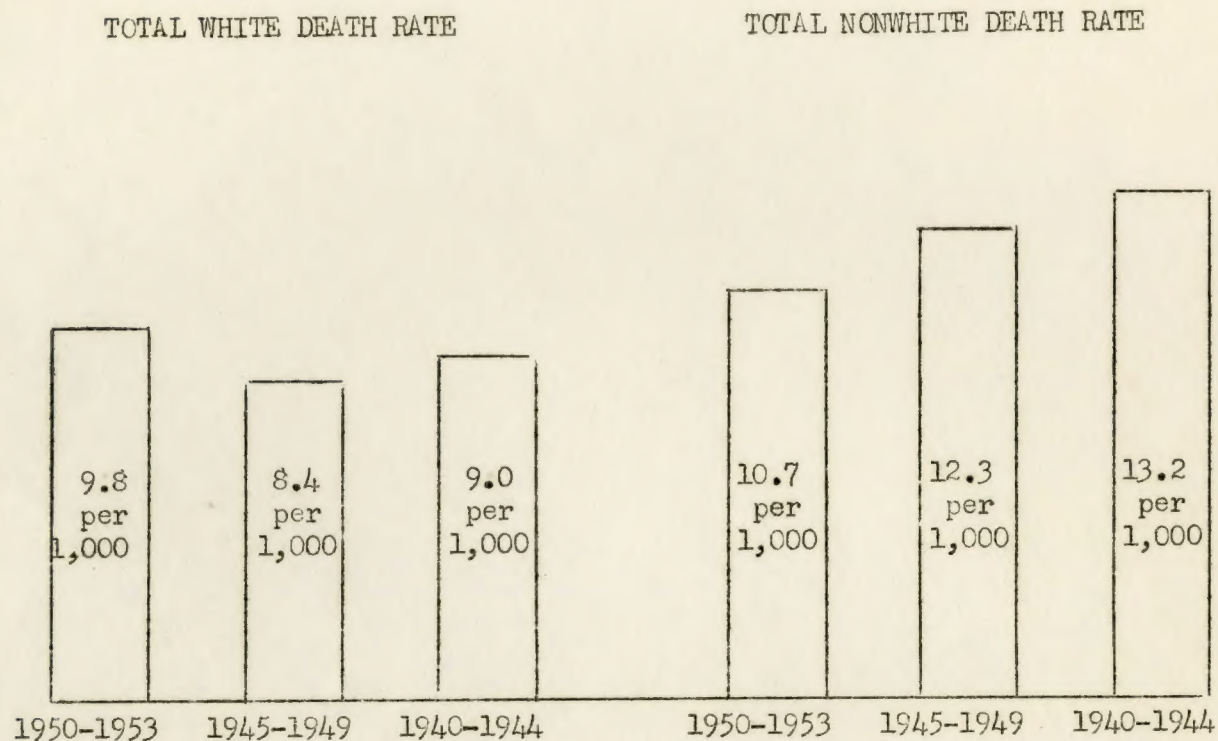
WHITE INFANT DEATH RATES

NONWHITE INFANT DEATH RATES



GRAPH 16. RESIDENT INFANT DEATH RATES D. C., BY COLOR; 1940-44, 1945-49, AND 1950-53

THE NUMBER OF DEATHS FROM ALL CAUSES TO D. C. RESIDENTS PER 1,000 OF THE TOTAL WHITE D. C. POPULATION WAS 9.0 IN 1940-44 AND 9.8 IN 1950-53; FOR THE TOTAL NONWHITE D. C. POPULATION IT DECREASED FROM 13.2 PER 1,000 IN 1940-44 TO 10.7 PER 1,000 IN 1950-53



GRAPH 17. RESIDENT DEATH RATES FOR THE TOTAL D. C. POPULATION BY COLOR; 1940-44, 1945-49 AND 1950-1953